

Message Text

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22

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07 LAB-04

NSAE-00 SIL-01 /030 W

----- 082612

R 101836Z DEC 76

FM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3850

INFO AMEMBAYUY BRIDGETOWN

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO

AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L GEORGETOWN 2505

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EGEN, ELAB, GY

SUBJECT: GUYBAU WORKERS STRIKE AT LINDEN

1. THE GUYANA CHRONICLE (DECEMBER 10, 1976) HAS REPORTED THAT WORKERS AT THE GUYANA BAUXITE COMPANY'S (GUYBAU) LINDEN COMPLEX HAVE GONE OUT ON STRIKE. GUYBAU WORKERS ARE REPORTEDLY DISSATISFIED WITH THE 6 PERCENT WAGE INCREASE NEGOTIATED BY UNION OFFICIALS LAST WEEK. AN EMERGENCY MEETING BETWEEN UNION (GUYANA MINE WORKERS' UNION) OFFICIALS AND GUYBAU OFFICIALS WAS HELD YESTERDAY (DECEMBER 9). APPARENTLY, NO SETTLEMENT WAS REACHED AT THIS LATTER MEEING. THE CHRONICLE ALSO REPORTED, HOWEVER, THAT QUOTE SELF-APPOINTED LEADERS UNQUOTE WERE KEEPING THE STRIKE ORDERLY.

2. GUYANA'S ECONOMY CAN LITTLE AFFORD A MAJOR STRIKE IN THE BAUXITE INDUSTRY. WITH FOREIGN RESERVES DEPLETED, RICE AND SUGAR EXPORT EARNINGS FAR BELOW ANTICIPATED LEVELS, BAUXITE REVENUES ARE MUCH NEEDED TO PAY FOR NECESSARY CAPITAL IMPORTS AND REQUIRED DEBT REPAYMENTS. THE STRIKE ESPECIALLY FLIES IN THE FACE OF THE CURRENT GOG CAMPAIGN TO INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY AND "TIGHTEN OUR BELTS." WHILE NO OFFICIAL DATA IS AVAILABLE, THE RATE OF INFLATION FOR THIS YEAR WAS PROBABLY AROUND

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8 PERCENT. IN ADDITION, THE GOVERNMENT'S PLANS

TO CUT FOOD PRODUCT SUBSIDIES WILL INCREASE THE
PRICES OF SOME BASIC COMMODITIES BY 40-50 PERCENT.
THUS, THE PREVIOUSLY NEGOTIATED 6 PERCENT PAY RAISE
CANNOT BE SEEN AS A REAL WAGE INCREASE. SOME
SOURCES INDICATE THAT GUYBAU WORKERS WILL NOT SETTLE
FOR LESS THAN A 10 PERCENT PAY RAISE.

3. COMMENT: AS INDICATION OF HOW SERIOUS GOG VIEWS
STRIKE, EMBOFF HEARD THAT OVER FORTY HELMETED
TACTICAL POLICE WERE SENT TO LINDEN TO PROTECT UNION
LEADERS AND PROPERTY, PRESUMABLY FROM DISSATISFIED
WORKERS. THIS MAY ACCOUNT FOR CRYPTIC MESSAGE
REPORTED IN PARA ONE ABOUT SELF-APPOINTED LEADERS
KEEPING THE STRIKE ORDERLY AND PREVENTING VIOLENCE.
IN ANY EVENT, GOG WILL WANT THIS STRIKE SETTLED
QUICKLY.
MCCOY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, WAGES, ECONOMIC CONDITIONS, LABOR STRIKES, NEGOTIATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 10 DEC 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976GEORGE02505
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760457-0832
From: GEORGETOWN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761255/aaaabvhd.tel
Line Count: 78
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 13 JUL 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <13 JUL 2004 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <14 JUL 2004 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: GUYBAU WORKERS STRIKE AT LINDEN
TAGS: EGEN, ELAB, GY
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006